

# Conversations

A Publication of the Margaret Fuller Society

Volume 5 ..... No. 1

## Margaret and the Meteor: Inviting Radical Transcendentalism into the Classroom

By Matthew Spencer

This is a story of failure. In every educator's career, moments occur in which, despite their best efforts, they find themselves at a loss for explanation. However, even in those moments there are flashes of promise. In this case, that promise requires making amends for an earlier relationship gone wrong. Dear reader, I'm thinking of inviting Margaret back into the classroom. Several semesters ago I decided upon a trial separation, a little time apart to see how we might change and grow. We had given it a good run and there were no hard feelings, but the relationship had grown stale. Sadly, the students in my American literature survey were pleased to see her go. They skimmed their way through the long excerpt from "The Great Lawsuit" found in the Norton anthology and came away mostly unimpressed. The piece was too long for their tastes—a typical reaction, of course, to any assigned reading—the

references to ancient mythology were alienating, and the core concepts seemed obvious to them. Men and women should be joined together in an equitable union of souls, simple. The students were familiar enough with basic feminist concepts such that they looked at Fuller as a relic of a bygone era, one left in the dust by the sleek, streamlined thinking of today. Students tend to likewise anticipate most writers in the survey course, despite their consistent eventual surprise to find otherwise.



But such surprise never seemed to arrive with Fuller. So I've come to ask: What does Fuller offer to today's college students? I wonder what about our moment offers itself to her brand of Transcendentalism and the revolutionary fire she kindled across her dynamic, short life.

*Continued on page 17*

• • •  
*In this Issue*

"Margaret and the Meteor"	1	"Fuller, Manso, and Harring: Revolutionaries	
Letter from the Editors	2	Meet in New York"	11
Letter from the President	4	"Breaking the Bronze Ceiling"	13
Inaugural Margaret Fuller Society Racial		Book Reviews of <i>Magnificent Rebels</i> and	
Justice Award, Presented to Jess Libow	5	<i>Dinner with Joseph Johnson</i>	14
Antiracist Conversations in Torino, Italy	6	"To MF: On Our Meeting in Verse"	16
First Joel Myerson Annual Lecture	8	Coffee Recipes, by Browning and Child	21
Member Profile: Christina Katopodis	9	Conferences and Calls for Papers	24

## Letter from the Editors (on New Directions for *Conversations*)

By Jessica Lipnack, Andrew Wildermuth, and Sonia Di Loreto

*Dear Fullerenes and Friends,*

In preparing this third issue of *Conversations* since its pandemic rebirth, we, as editors, have been drawn to questions that Margaret Fuller posed almost two centuries ago. In the first session of her “Conversations” series in Boston, she asked her participants: “What were we born to do? How shall we do it?” Similarly over the past months, we have asked ourselves in both playful and earnest ways: What has this version of *Conversations* been “born to do?” And “how shall we do it?”

Our internal conversations have ranged widely over potential directions for the publication: Who is our audience? What is our subject matter? What are our publishing standards and editorial policies? What should *Conversations* look like? (Sincerest thanks to Christina Katopodis, who, as our new Design Editor, has so resoundingly answered this question.) We’ve even asked what we should call this. Is it a newsletter, or are its horizons wider?



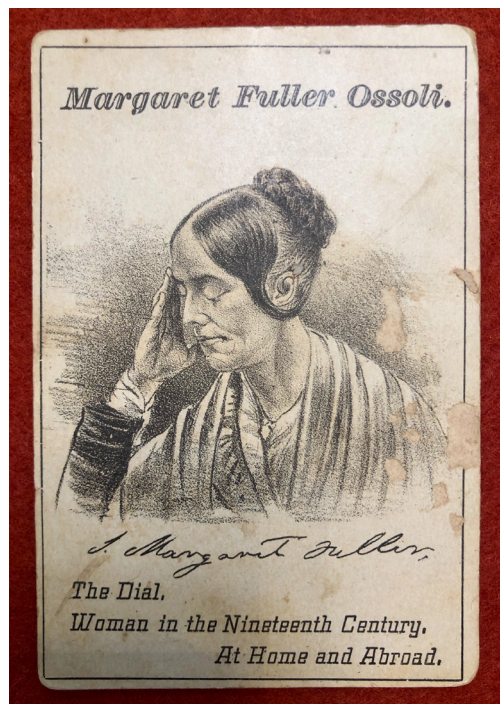
On a windy day in October 2022, behind The Old Manse in Concord, MA, Jessica Lipnack sits between her twin grandsons. This boulder is said to be the “rock” where Margaret often lay and contemplated her surroundings and, on one occasion, “talked of our dreams” with Waldo Emerson, in July 1844. (See Martha L. Berg and Alice de V. Perry, eds., ““The Impulses of Human Nature””: Margaret Fuller’s Journal from June Through October 1844,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 102, 1990, p. 89).



Associate Editors Andrew Wildermuth and Sonia Di Loreto

In a time when written discourse abounds—with texts and emails and must-read articles, with ads on the underground, with endless reels of blue-light text on phones and laptops—writing seems both so mundane and so sacred. We seem to read always, squinting all day. Some of our highest and lowest points are in the consumption of text. But—in the spirit both of Fuller’s above self-interrogating questions and her coordinating legendary, gender-bending “Conversations”—we suggest that slow, patient, focused writing and reading, with serious deliberation on the meaning and historical importance of language, are of central import to encouraging new social possibilities. We want, therefore, to publish not primarily the Society’s news, but what can be of news to the Society: new voices, new perspectives, new and challenging readings of texts more and less familiar.

In this spirit, we hope to gently redirect and refocus *Conversations* to emphasize a range of bright voices in and beyond our Society. We aim to introduce topics about and related to Margaret Fuller and her time, with



a renewed zeal for allowing people to, like Fuller in so many ways did, express themselves and their worlds in new, provocative ways. We therefore invite you to share your ideas, your political critiques, your stranded poetic fragments, your historical interventions, your accounts of the delights or difficulties of being in this world—especially, but not necessarily exclusively, with Fuller and the nineteenth century in mind. To underscore the new direction and after discussion with our officers and board members, we’ve changed our tagline to “A Publication of the Margaret Fuller Society.”

And if ours is a time of textual overload, it is also one of urgency for defending accurate written accounts of history and its afterlives. As a society dedicated to the study of one of the more famous inhabitants of the nineteenth century, we find it critically important to deal unequivocally and accurately with judgments on nineteenth-century political history. Criticism, especially of Fuller and her peers, is essential here. If the Margaret Fuller Society, with its *Conversations*, is not the place for debate on the ongoing profundity of the politics of Fuller and her reforming collaborators and competitors, where else ought this happen? While we warmly welcome pieces that consider the contributions of Fuller to world literature and politics, we just as enthusiastically welcome critique of those of Fuller and her contemporaries. Critical to our time, we explicitly invite discussion of the politics of race, colonialism, and Indigenous life in the Americas, as also reflected

in the Society’s new racial justice teaching award. We see such work begun in our previous issue, Vol. 4, No. 2, in the essay published on David Walker, reflecting on the alternative worlds that Fuller’s peers outside the white American literati had imagined, demanded, and brought into being in the nineteenth-century. This type of critical eye and analysis of pasts, presents, and futures is what we believe to be the role of *Conversations* in our time.

The result of these self-definitions and queries aimed inward and outward—for now, as we understand this as an ongoing, collaborative process—is this issue presented here, *Conversations: A Publication of the Margaret Fuller Society* Vol. 5, No. 1. Herewith:

- An essay on how an instructor reengaged his students in Fuller’s work;
- The inaugural MFS Racial Justice Award, presented to Haverford Lecturer Jess Libow, along with the text of her award-winning submission;
- Reports on a conference on racism and resistance in Torino, Italy, where several MFS members took part, as well as on the convening of the Joel Myerson Lecture Series and the event’s inaugural address;
- The first poem in what we envision as a poetry column in forthcoming issues, and
- Two recipes (yes, recipes) for coffee (yes, coffee) by two of Margaret’s contemporaries, along with many other pieces.

Please let us know what you think about this new direction, and about this issue. Keep the ideas flowing and take part in keeping *Conversations* ever sharp and critical. Send us essays, reviews, images, poems, Letters to the Editor, or stubborn and inter-genre things. Send us things that sing, things to debate, things that both admire and challenge the work of Fuller and her circles, things that better light the world that her contemporaries and we inhabit, and that help build new worlds and ways of seeing them.

The next deadline for such contributions, for *Conversations* Vol. 5, No. 2, is December 31st, 2023. We very much look forward to reading your work, and to continuing these *Conversations* of ours, ever onward.

*The Editors*  
Jessica, Andrew, and Sonia

## Letter from the President

By Sonia Di Loreto



Dear Friends,

This past spring I was fortunate enough to spend a few weeks at the [American Antiquarian Society](#) in Worcester, Massachusetts, where I was conducting research for a book project. Its archives are a treasure trove, a crucial and wonderful institution for researchers. Among many fascinating documents, I came across a card game—"The Queens of Literature"—published in 1885, in New York, by McLoughlin Bros., Inc. The game includes sixty-four cards with names of sixteen authors, each of whom has three cards with titles of her respective works. The game's rules consist of correctly matching authors' names and works. Among these queens is Margaret Fuller, with her selected works: *The Dial*, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, and *At Home and Abroad*.

This pack of cards fascinates me not only because of the choices regarding Fuller's canon (where was *Summer on the Lakes?*), but also because of the company she kept on paper (George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Celia Thaxter, and Adeline D. T. Whitney) and how these women are depicted. Each woman, in fact, is presented with her most popular portrait on her cards and with her own signature. Looking at these types of *cartes de visite* conjures images of these women as subtly familiar presenc-

es in the homes of people who might have enjoyed this game, participating in the domestic life of the players in sociable ways that go beyond the mere act of reading.

While this "game of authors" was itself not entirely new, I was particularly struck in this case by the canonization of women writers and their popularization within the rules of a board game. In the late 1880s, literature was, of course, a serious business but also something potentially playful, a card game where individual authors signed their work and could be literally shuffled together.

Encountering this game made me consider how our Fuller Society operates under somewhat similar assumptions, with analogous aspirations: we recognize Fuller's canon and her individuality as a woman author, but we are also, more and more, placing her in conversation and in debates with other cultural figures that might help to display the bright spots, and the gray areas, in her writing and in her historical era.

If this 1885 card game represents only white, Anglo American women as "Queens of Literature," we certainly do not want to make the same mistakes by keeping Fuller stuck in only this company—or in only this deck, so to speak. We want to continue to add more and more figures—unexpected, distant and close, multi-racial, American, and international—to our conversations. We want to create new possibilities for learning and for critical reflection. I hope this new issue will keep expanding such spaces, widening the boundaries of our rule books, rearranging the boards on which we work and play.

Happy reading,

Sonia Di Loreto  
President, Margaret Fuller Society



## Jess Libow Receives Inaugural Margaret Fuller Society Racial Justice Award

The Society's Committee on Racial Justice is pleased to enthusiastically present the inaugural Margaret Fuller Society Racial Justice Award to Jess Libow, of Haverford College.

Professor Libow's antiracist and feminist approach in teaching "citation as a political act" offers a strikingly original, inventive way of teaching Margaret Fuller's writing. The Committee remarked on "the fresh ways of thinking about writers 'in conversation'" that this submission inspired and applauded the engagement of varied Black feminist theories of citation, alongside the writing of both Anna Julia Cooper and Fuller. The course provides a fitting means of "honoring" the two writers and the women—Black and white—who went before them, as it also provides historical perspectives on women's efforts to reclaim their cultural histories and pass them on to later generations.

Below is Professor Libow's description of her course. We hope that you find it as inspiring as did the Committee on Racial Justice. And we hope that those of you who teach Fuller in racial justice contexts will also consider sharing your approaches here in *Conversations*.

### Submission: Margaret Fuller Society Racial Justice Teaching Award

By Jess Libow



Jess Libow (above) is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Writing Program at Haverford College where she teaches courses on health and gender in U.S. literature and culture from the nineteenth century to the present.

Many student writers worry about citing their sources. They are often eager to learn proper practices and anxious about the consequences of failing to do so. In what follows, I reflect on how studying nineteenth-century women writers can push students beyond their concerns about compliance and invite them to recognize citation as a political act.

During the second week of "Feminism Before Suffrage," the first-year writing seminar I taught in the fall of 2022, I assigned Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845). In class, I invited students to interrogate Fuller's use of sources by working in pairs to research a figure named in the text. Students identified an array of women upon whose stories Fuller builds her arguments. Many engaged Greek mythology, exploring the significance of "Minerva" and the "Muse[s]," while others researched "famous women" including "Elizabeth of England" and "Isabella who furnished Columbus." Later in class, we returned to these figures when discussing Fuller's refusal of the accolade of being "above her sex." Recognizing how Fuller situates her own appeal within a tradition of women's contributions, students were able to see feminism as an iterative, collaborative endeavor, and citation as a record of women's intellectual and political labor.

We returned to the subject of citation later in the semester when my students read a chapter from Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892), which begins by acknowledging the progressive political contributions of prominent white American women such as Dorothea Dix and Lucretia Mott, before offering an alternative lineage. The Black feminist tradition Cooper outlines includes writers we had studied in class such as Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Sojourner Truth, as well as others including Amanda Smith and Charlotte Fortin Grimke. "To

be a woman of the Negro race,” she writes, “is to have a heritage [...] unique in the ages.” To begin our lesson, I asked students to compare Cooper’s work to a previous text. Many returned to Fuller and her feminist “citations.” We discussed how Cooper does not simply add Black women to a white feminist “bibliography,” such as the one constructed by Fuller in *Woman*. Instead, Cooper separates the two lists of names in order to underscore the need for a politics that actively *centers* rather than simply includes Black women.

The final week of the semester gave students an opportunity to consider contemporary applications of Fuller’s and Cooper’s respective approaches to citation. For homework, students read the introduction to philosopher Sara Ahmed’s *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) in which Ahmed writes of the book, “I do not cite any white men [...]. Instead, I cite those who have contributed to the genealogy of feminism and antiracism.” In class, we discussed the implications of Ahmed’s approach to citation. While some students were wary of Ahmed’s emphasis on identity politics, we eventually concluded that the intellectual tradition Ahmed establishes was not a superficial display of inclusion—it provided her with a specific foundation for the radical ideas she develops. I then distributed a copy of founder Christen A. Smith’s “Cite Black Women: A Critical Praxis” (2018), which calls upon readers to “reconfigure the politics of knowledge production” by “acknowledg[ing] and honor[ing] Black women’s transnational intellectual production.” Students were drawn to this practice grounded in instruction (“cite”) rather than prohibition (“I do not cite...”). Taken together, Ahmed’s emphasis on “genealogy” and Smith’s commitment to “honoring” reminded students of both Fuller’s and Cooper’s texts and provided models for students’ own research and writing practices.

This sequence offered students a new framework for citation. As one later reflected: “Before this course, I obviously knew the importance of citation but only as an academic requirement to avoid plagiarism; through [...] this course, I learned that citation is also a tool of empowerment and a chance to make people’s voices heard.” The feminist and antiracist politics of citation, they discovered, has its own intellectual genealogy, one in which Fuller occupies a crucial place.

## Infrastructures of Racism and the Contours of Black Vitality and Resistance: An International Conference

A Report by Leslie Eckel

Sonia Di Loreto, President of the Margaret Fuller Society, welcomed an international group of scholars this spring to a fascinating and timely conference at the University of Torino, in Italy. “Infrastructures of Racism and the Contours of Black Vitality and Resistance” spanned three days in March and included four keynote addresses, six roundtables, and a lively pedagogical workshop for teachers and students in Italian secondary schools and universities. What made this conference such an extraordinary experience was not only the hospitality of Sonia and her colleagues but also the ways in which the presentations intersected with one another, building a shared framework for antiracist understanding and activism.

After warm welcomes from university leaders and a representative from the U.S. mission to Italy, as well as from Sonia herself, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon (Northeastern University, USA) opened the conference with a thought-provoking talk on “Racial Capitalism and the Story of Sweetness.” Dillon’s study of the circum-Atlantic production and consumption of sugar brought together food politics, environmental studies, and racial justice, in her exploration of the cravings for sweetness



Above: A group of conference participants gathering for lunch at a local Torino craft beer brewery.

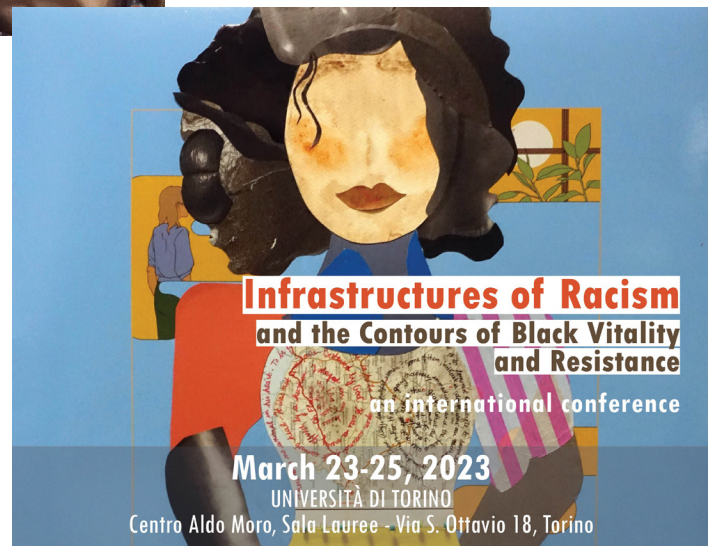


Left: Andrew Wildermuth, Sonia Di Loreto, and Leslie Eckel pose for a selfie in Torino, Italy.

Below: Artwork by Lena Louise Marie Châteaux

and wealth that created a broad system of racist oppression. Later, artist and curator Nico Brierre Aziz (New Orleans, USA) gave a visually engaging presentation titled “I’d Rather Get Out Of Jail Than Get \$1,000,000,” in which he shared personal reflections on Black joy and discussed his creative efforts to open up museum spaces to wider audiences. Kevin Quashie (Brown University, USA) and Maria Giulia Fabi (University of Ferrara, Italy) gave additional keynote addresses, titled, respectively, “The Matter of Black Sentences” and “The Personal and the Political in African American Fiction of the Early Jim Crow Era.”

This conference was by far the most delicious academic event I have ever attended! Participants were fueled by local specialties, including *gianduiotto* (mini chocolate bars infused with hazelnuts), and we connected with one another during breaks over espresso and pastries from Eataly, a food emporium founded in Torino in 2007 that has expanded worldwide. These exciting discussions continued during several roundtable sessions. Andrew Wildermuth presented his work on “Education, Liberating Violence, and Malleability in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*,” focusing on the “practice of realizing physical force as part of an ongoing process of freedom.” I shared “An Antiracist Strategy of Teaching Self-Reliance” from my survey course on American literature from its origins to 1865, where I invite students to investigate how self-reliance is shaped by gender and race in writings by Emerson, Fuller, Douglass, Thoreau, and Johnston Schoolcraft. Other presentations concentrated on modern and contemporary texts and issues in American literary studies, cultural studies, and film and media studies,



including the representation of Black single women in fiction by Pauline Hopkins, Jessie Fauset, and Nella Larsen; poetry about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan; and the film adaptation of Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*.

Overall, this conference sparked new intellectual connections, cross-cultural friendships, and potential collaborations. While the conference did not focus exclusively on Margaret Fuller or the nineteenth-century United States, our conversations advanced the larger mission of the MFS to encourage public-facing scholarship and to support the pursuit of racial justice. I applaud Sonia for her groundbreaking plans for this event and her tremendous effort in bringing that vision to life!

*Leslie Eckel is the Communications Officer of the Margaret Fuller Society and an Associate Professor of English at Suffolk University in Boston.*

## Megan Marshall Is First Speaker In Joel Myerson Annual Lecture Series

By Lisa West



On April 27, 2023, Megan Marshall delivered the lecture “After Lives: Bringing Una Hawthorne Home,” the first in the Joel Myerson Annual Lecture Series (see *Conversations*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 13). The series commemorates Myerson’s legacy and extends his contributions to the intersections of academic scholarship and public humanities.

Known as the “Dean of Transcendentalism studies,” Myerson was an early president of the Fuller Society who compiled Fuller’s bibliography and edited her New York journalism, and was generally a prolific scholar. He died in 2021.

In her [lecture](#), available on the Concord Free Public Library website, Marshall talked about the “after lives” of many in the Transcendentalist circle, focusing on the short, tragic life of Una Hawthorne, Nathaniel and Sophia Peabody Hawthorne’s first child.

Speakers from the six organizations sponsoring the lecture series offered remembrances of Myerson. Sherry Litwack, president of the board of the Concord Free Public Library, described the purpose of the series and connections to the library of several attending. Michael Weisenburg, editor of the Emerson Society Papers and Associate Director of Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of South Carolina, Myerson’s home institution, spoke about Myerson’s contributions to the Emerson Society, including his being both a founding member and past president. Sandra

Petrulionis, Professor of English at Penn State Altoona, who was a graduate student when she met Myerson and is author of *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau’s Concord*, represented the Thoreau Society, where Myerson served as president from 1992–1996, calling him the “consummate Thoreauvian.” Phyllis Cole, MFS past president and scholar of Transcendentalism, credited Myerson as largely responsible for bringing Fuller back to public consciousness in the 1970s and 1980s. Professor Daniel Shealy, a student of Myerson’s, spoke on behalf of the Louisa May Alcott Society, where Myerson served as its first president. Noelle Baker, who is co-editor with Marshall and Brigitte Bailey of *Margaret Fuller: Collected Writings* (Library of America, forthcoming) and who led the organizing effort for the first lecture, spoke on behalf of the Association for Documentary Editing where Myerson served as its first president. Anke Voss, the curator for the Concord Free Public Library’s William Munroe Special Collections, which hosted the lecture, introduced Marshall as the evening’s speaker.

Moving forward, Leslie Eckel will serve as MFS liaison to the series, and will lead our participation in running the event in 2025.

From the [Concord Free Public Library website](#): “The Joel Myerson Annual Lecture Series will engage the public in the study of American literature and literary history, focusing on writers associated with Concord, Massachusetts, and American Transcendentalism, with an interdisciplinary outlook. The series will highlight the work and ideas of emergent scholarship, drawing on the values Myerson personified as a generous mentor, teacher, and public speaker and amplifying the diversity of representation that Joel Myerson exemplified in his textual scholarship and editorial initiatives. The series will promote lifelong learning and the recovery of primary source materials that teach us about the future as well as the past—beginning in Concord and radiating outward to American literature and culture as a means to engage with current events, conservation, and reform.”

*Lisa West is Professor of English at Drake University, and Financial Officer of the Margaret Fuller Society.*



## Member Profile: Christina Katopodis

Editor's note: Christina Katopodis answers questions about how she teaches *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; her recent book, [The New College Classroom](#); and baking as politics.



**Q.** How did you become interested in Margaret Fuller? What led you to her?

**A.** I began as an Emerson scholar. He was my entry-point into Transcendentalism, but Margaret Fuller was where my feminist activism merged with my scholarly work. I was drawn to her as a woman intellectual and someone who challenged the status quo with her remarkable mind and fiery spirit. Now I describe myself as being on “Team Margaret” when talking with my students about how her male contemporaries portrayed her in essays, biographies, and fiction.

**Q.** Which aspects of MF’s intellectual life—her pedagogy, feminism, political involvement, interest in history, passion for language and languages, etc.—are most like yours?

**A.** Her pedagogy resembles my own. She acted as a “nucleus” of discussion rather than dictating knowledge to other women. This allowed the women in her “Conversations” to arrive at ideas on their own. This is a form of active learning so important for learners to find their confidence, to find their voices in discussion, and to practice speaking their minds.

**Q.** Many people outside of New England study Fuller.

Do you feel your being in Brooklyn, so close to MF’s NYC stomping ground, has an effect on how you view her thinking?

**A.** Fuller lived in Manhattan and Brooklyn, and I do think living in New York has changed the way I approach both Fuller and New York in the nineteenth century. She was a city girl in a metropolitan urban environment, which must have suited her and her multilingualism. One of the things I love about her letters from New York is finding her descriptions of the flowers that she observes at different points in the season, which calls my attention to the details of plant and animal life around me in Brooklyn. While studying her letters, I began to think more about the natural life that overran parts of the five boroughs in her time, which brought me back to Thoreau and his six months on Staten Island in 1843. During the pandemic, I dove into Staten Island archives and found so much about abolitionism and free Black communities on the island, and that research has turned into a larger scholarly project that I’m working on now.

**Q.** You and Cathy N. Davidson have written *The New College Classroom* (Harvard University Press, 2022), which has gotten rave reviews. Can you draw any parallels between that book and MF’s thinking?

**A.** Phyllis Cole has framed Fuller’s pedagogical work in the Boston Conversations as producing a revolution in the minds of women. That is what Cathy and I have sought to do in our book: revolutionize higher education to be more equitable and just, one classroom or one teacher-scholar’s mind at a time. That is why we start the book with the section on “Changing Ourselves,” which interrogates our assumptions of “rigor” in academia. A system that prides itself on exclusivity isn’t rigorous; it is far more rigorous to take on the challenge of inclusion and accessibility—to allow a diverse population of students and faculty to change and even transform the system, to make it accessible to all to create something new—than to maintain an institution that has replicated itself since the nineteenth century. Instead of dictating lectures to her pupils, Fuller adopt-

ed a new system of horizontal, Socratic discussion to instill her pupils with confidence in their own expertise and life experience. Fuller also innovated in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* by building a case for equal opportunities for women by way of anecdote. Stories and anecdotes are extremely powerful, precisely because they are accessible. We use loads of anecdotes in *The New College Classroom* because of this. It can be easier to imagine transformation in your own classroom after seeing it in someone else's, after feeling your way through it, in imagination, when following a story in a book.

**Q.** You are an extraordinary baker. Have you baked anything with a “Margaret flavor,” so to speak?

**A.** I've made rainbow swirl cupcakes with sprinkles that celebrate Pride. Fuller had a blended identity. We stand to learn from her boldness, strength, and radical optimism today. As a bisexual woman, scholar, and someone who grew up feeling like they were “too much” for reserved New Englanders, I find it is productive to draw from Fuller's writings and biography to think about the power of love to transgress. More recently, I designed and baked a cake for Fuller's birthday inspired by her story, “The Magnolia of Lake Pontchartrain,” where an orange tree is tired of being picked by men and transforms into a magnolia tree to stand in her own beauty.

**Q.** What projects are you working on now?

**A.** I'm working on abolitionism and Black lives on Staten Island in the 1840s. This island hosted two stops on the Underground Railroad and was a critical pivot point for many people sailing north to freedom because it was a required stop for quarantine (for yellow fever) in the Atlantic. At least two slave narratives mention this pivotal stopping place. Moreover, the free Black neighborhood of Sandy Ground, as old as Seneca Village and Weeksville, is almost never talked about. Staten Island has been called the “forgotten borough,” always in the shadow of others, but it's where many abolitionists lived, and that activist spirit and free, sprawling land and sea must have made an impression on the young and yet unpublished Thoreau. I'm building an argument for Staten Island's rightful place at the heart of nineteenth-century literary and Black history.



Above: A [pistachio cake](#) with [American buttercream](#) frosting and fondant magnolia flower.

**Q.** Do you teach MF? What MF texts do you use and who are your students?

**A.** I teach the entirety of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. I tell my students to focus on her argument by anecdote, and not to look for a linear argument. This frees students to focus on the examples most relevant and interesting to them. CUNY offers a rigorous and affordable education to a large population of first-generation and immigrant students. Some of my students new to life in the U.S. and in New York are learning about feminism for the first time, while others find many of the historical texts we read aren't radical enough. They are so aware of the world and systems of oppression embedded in our society. Sometimes teaching Fuller feels like lighting a match—yes, even the nineteenth century has texts that can teach us and reach us today.

**Q.** If you could eavesdrop on a conversation between MF and one of her contemporaries, whom would you most like her to talk to? What would they say?

**A.** Caroline Sturgis. I'd mostly want to listen to Caroline's reactions to Fuller to get a better sense of how and where their minds and hearts met in conversation.

## New York, 1846: Margaret Fuller, Juana Manso, and Paul Harro Harring

By Barry L. Velleman and Karina Belletti

In 1846, three protofeminist radical thinkers from three parts of the world accidentally came together in New York City. Margaret Fuller (1810–50), born in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, was there working as the first woman to serve as editor of *The New-York Tribune*. “The Dane,” as Fuller referred to him, Paul Harro Harring (1798–1870), of North Frisia, now Germany, came to the city in late 1843, working as an artist, writer, and revolutionary, who introduced Fuller to Mazzini. In April 1846, Juana Paula Manso (1819–75), of Argentina, arrived in the United States from Brazil with her Portuguese-born musician husband, Francisco de Sá Noronha (1820–81). It is not a stretch to regard Manso as the Argentine Fuller: their biographical and ideological parallels are striking. Both were educated by their fathers and both were poets, educators, and journalists—and feminists. Manso, nine years Fuller’s junior, was also a dramatist, historian, novelist, and activist.

Harring and Manso’s first shared interest was the Greek independence movement of the 1820s: Harring as a fighter, Manso as the translator of a biography of the Greek heroine Manto Mavrogenous. They met in person in South America around 1840, and were supporters of the “Young Italy” movement led by Mazzini. Both Fuller and Manso ultimately would write poems dedicated to this frustrated republican movement in which Fuller participated directly in the late 1840s. All three favored republicanism, women’s rights, marriage reform, and universal education.

Both Harring and Manso had traveled widely: Harring as a revolutionary, Manso as an exile from political strife in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. Within weeks of their arrival in New York, Manso and her husband Noronha, had met Margaret Fuller. Fuller published notices of Noronha’s New York violin concerts in the *Tribune*, and was likely the translator of a brief promotional biography on him, originally written in Spanish by Manso and published in the *Tribune* on April 29th. The same month as the couple’s arrival, Harring self-published the novel *Dolores*, which became available in New York and Montevideo. Harring’s book was a mixture of pro-republican and pro-woman diatribe, featuring an “Introduction to Mazzini,” and a busy



[Juana Paula Manso](#) (1819–1875)

maritime plot. Literary historian and biographer David S. Reynolds has characterized the novel as original in its “militarism,” as it contains “some of the most forthright feminist passages in ante-bellum fiction.”<sup>1</sup> By the time he published *Dolores*, Harring had become a cause célèbre in New York when Harper canceled his book contract for his novel, which Fuller and other writers regarded as censorship.

The work was highly praised by both Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson envied Harring’s ability to write “novels for the people,” and had worked hard to find a publisher. In line with her positive review of *Dolores* in the April 25th issue of the *Tribune*, Fuller impulsively contributed \$500—“half of her savings”—in support of its publication, according to her biographer Charles Capper. Harper Brothers, which had signed a contract with Harring to publish the book, ultimately refused to print it because it was “not duly orthodox,” the company said. This led to a lawsuit in late June of that year. Fuller was present at the trial as a potential witness but apparently was never called to testify. Because of a split jury, the suit was dropped. What Harring and Fuller saw as dogmatic censorship unworthy of a supposedly democratic country became the subject of Fuller’s *Tribune* article on February 3rd, “Publishers and Authors. *Dolores* by Harro Harring.”

The more than fifty characters in *Dolores* were, in its author’s own words, “portraits drawn after nature.” On April 27th, an unsigned article in *The New York Herald*

made the claim that the novel's title character, *Dolores* (Spanish for "pains"), was modeled on the life of Juana Manso:

This lady, born at Buenos Ayres, is a well known and highly distinguished South American poetess, and her life is so much tinged with romance, that the distinguished Scandinavian bard, Harro Harring, made her the original of his 'Dolores,' a historical romance of South America, the first number of which has just appeared in this city.

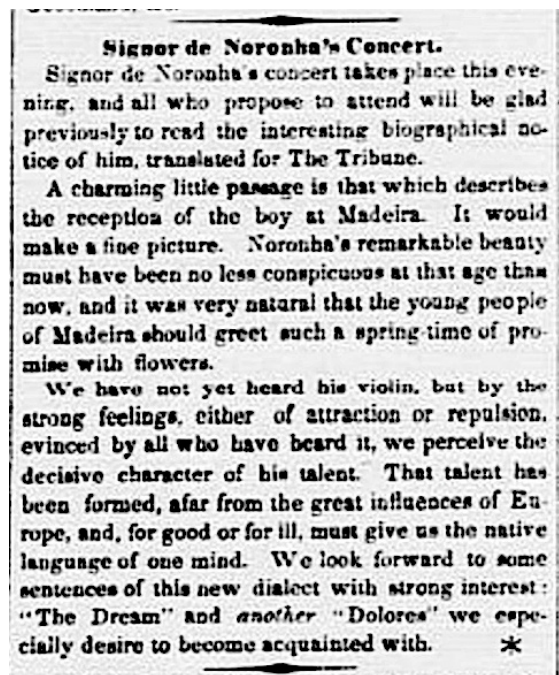
On April 29th, Fuller's notice of Manso's husband Noronha's concert included her desire to become acquainted with his composition "Dolores," and "another Dolores," that is, Juana Manso. Soon, Manso returned to Brazil with her family—she now had two daughters, born in New York and Havana, respectively—and traveled between that country and Argentina. She founded women's journals in Rio de Janeiro and in Buenos Aires, and in 1855 became a stage actress to make money, appearing in dozens of plays in Rio. This new career lasted until 1859, when she and her husband, who was often on tour in Europe, separated permanently.

Noronha returned to Portugal, and Manso moved with her daughters to Buenos Aires. From that point on, Manso dedicated herself to Argentine public education, despite vehement local opposition because of her gender and her perceived radicalism.

She corresponded with Mary Peabody Mann, a friend of Argentina's president, Domingo Sarmiento; translated Mary's husband Horace Mann's works; founded libraries; edited Argentina's major educational journal; wrote textbooks; promoted the professionalization of teachers; and expanded educational opportunities for girls and women.

Perhaps reflecting the influence of Margaret Fuller, Manso wrote in support of marginalized groups in her country and beyond—poor people, prostitutes, prisoners, the enslaved, immigrants, and indigenous peoples. Manso, like Fuller, attacked society's "arbitrary barriers" that made (especially, married) women "slaves." In 1854, Manso wrote: "[A] woman's intelligence [...] is her finest adornment."

Years later, on August 22, 1862, Harring wrote an ar-



ticle for the British newspaper *The Jersey Independent and Daily Telegraph* accusing agents of the Argentine dictator Rosas of having a connection to Harper Brothers that he used to influence the publisher to break Harring's publishing contract. This last point was evidently communicated to Emerson, who wrote to his brother William, in March 1847, that "some foreign or some religious influence" had intervened in Harper's decision.<sup>2</sup> In 1865, Manso herself acknowledged that she had been the model for Dolores.<sup>3</sup>

Margaret Fuller was the first of the three to die: along with her husband and child, she perished in a shipwreck near Fire Island, New York, on July 19, 1850. Harro Harring committed suicide in Jersey, England, in May 1870. Manso died of edema five years later, at fifty-five, on April 24th.

*Barry L. Velleman is Professor Emeritus of Spanish, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.*

*Karina Belletti is a certified translator (Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina), an independent scholar, and a playwright.*

#### Endnotes

1. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Oxford UP, 2011), p. 390.
2. Ralph L. Rusk (ed.), *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Columbia UP, 1939), III, p. 382. Emphasis in original.
3. *La tribuna* (Buenos Aires), November 28, 1865.

## Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso Breaks the Bronze Ceiling

By Maria Dintino

I suspect my introduction to Italian Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso (1808–71) resembles that of others. It occurred during my reading about Margaret Fuller’s ventures in Europe, and especially her time in Rome. I admit to being captivated by this princess and her intriguing life story. Di Belgiojoso seemed to match Fuller in intellect, courage, action, and dedication to the establishment of a Roman Republic.

The similarities don’t end there. Both women were writers, journalists, and staunch advocates for the education and rights of women.

One clear distinction, however, is di Belgiojoso’s especially privileged access to resources, as compared to Fuller’s constant quest to maintain stable finances. Di Belgiojoso was born to a prominent Milanese family, and at sixteen she married into nobility. She was exposed to official politics early on—like Fuller, by way of her father’s legal and legislative career—and never stopped fighting for the unification of Italy, even while twice exiled.

A direct connection between di Belgiojoso and Fuller is their mutual hospital directorship during the fight to maintain the Roman Republic. In fact, di Belgiojoso recruited Fuller to manage one of the hospitals and tend to the wounded, which by several accounts Fuller executed with admirable devotion.

Of great interest to me, and relevant to consideration of these two historic women, is the “Breaking the Bronze Ceiling” movement, a united effort to increase the number of women represented in public spaces around the world. I’ve been tracking this movement for several years, so you can imagine my elation to discover that a statue of di Belgiojoso was installed on September 15th, 2021, to mark 150 years since her death.

The statue resides in di Belgiojoso’s hometown. Of the 121 statues in the city of Milan, the bronze statue of di Belgiojoso is the first of an historic woman. Clearly, it is one very worthy of such recognition.

The statue, sculpted by Italian artist Giuseppe Bergomi, is located appropriately in Piazza di Belgiojoso, and depicts di Belgiojoso seated as though hosting one of



Left: Portrait by Francesco Hayez, 1832; Right: Belgiojoso statue from Congolandia.g. [CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

her well-attended salons—ready to rise up, as she was known to do. With a book under one hand, and papers and a quill pen in the other, she appears engaged in the intellectual and activist pursuits that were her life’s mission.

The inscription on the back of the statue quotes di Belgiojoso:

May the happy and honored women of future times turn their thoughts bit by bit to the sorrows and humiliations of the women who preceded them in life, and recall with some gratitude the names of those who opened and prepared for them the way to the never before enjoyed, perhaps barely dreamed of happiness!

The name we recall with more than “some gratitude,” that of Margaret Fuller, raises the question: Where should the overdue statue of Fuller be installed? Cambridge or Boston? Concord, Massachusetts, or New York City? Establishing a statue in a public space is indeed a lengthy and involved process, but I, for one, would love to see her receive the same recognition and honor as Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso.

In the meantime, I thoroughly celebrate this tribute to di Belgiojoso and hope to see her statue in person one day!

Maria Dintino is the author of *The Light Above: A Memoir with Margaret Fuller* and is co-founder and contributor to the [Nasty Women Writers](#) Project.

## Book Reviews

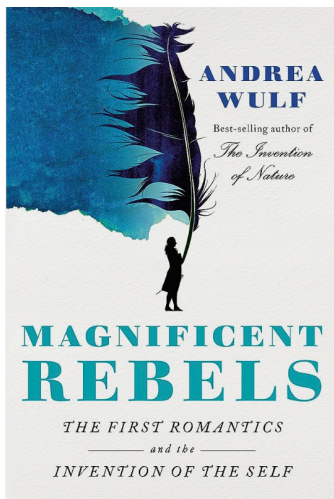
### Overlapping Circles: Emerging Feminism in the Revolutionary Era

By John A. Buehrens

Wulf, Andrea. *Magnificent Rebels: The First Romantics and the Invention of the Self*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. 494 pages. \$20.00.

Hay, Daisy. *Dinner with Joseph Johnson: Books and Friendship in a Revolutionary Age*. Princeton University Press, 2023. 493 pages. \$39.95.

Even before Margaret Fuller found both encouragement and frustration within the male-dominated circle of New England Transcendentalists, two other early feminists with strong philosophical and religious connections to Margaret's developed within similar intellectual circles. Both have recently been lifted up in wonderfully lively narratives.



Andrea Wulf, who is as self-educated, learned, and multilingual as Fuller, won the Pulitzer Prize, among other awards, for *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* (2015). She now vividly describes the whole “Jena Circle,” as it

flourished in that small German university town between 1794 and 1806. Goethe, living in nearby Weimar, was an immense influence to this group and the subject of Fuller's first real literary passion. Fuller's first book publication was *Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of His Life*, an 1839 translation of J. P. Eckermann's 1836 *Gespräche mit Goethe*.

As a young woman, Fuller had read Goethe's *Italian Journey*, and when her father hoped to be appointed to a diplomatic post in Europe, she longed to interview those who knew Goethe personally and to then write his biography. That ambition, frustrated by the untimely death of her father, never entirely disappeared.

When she finally made it to Europe, in 1847, it was as a correspondent for *The New-York Tribune* and as governess to nine-year-old Eddie, the son of her Quaker friends, Marcus and Rebecca Spring. When the Springs went north, citing malaria in Rome and their son's delicate health, Fuller bade them farewell at Venice and returned to Rome, where she located herself on the Corso, within sight of the house where Goethe had stayed.

Had she made it to Germany, Fuller might have encountered the story of a forgotten feminist in the Jena Circle, which might be called the original, or *ursprünglicher*, Transcendental Club. Wulf tells the story of Caroline Schelling (née Michaelis), the daughter of a Lutheran theologian, and therefore an unusually well-educated woman in her time.

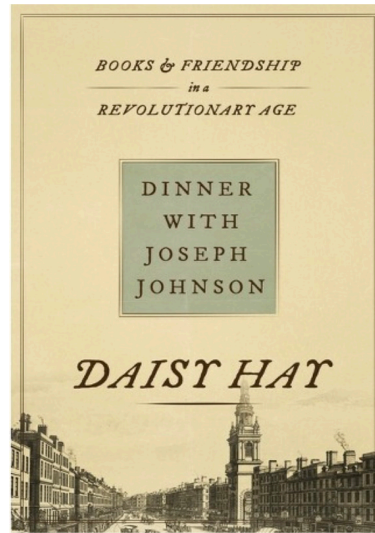
Her first marriage, arranged by her father, was to a physician. Exposed to the infectious diseases of the time, he left her a widow and single mother at 24, in 1787. Imprisoned for sympathizing with the French Revolution, Caroline next married August Wilhelm Schlegel, helping him with his authoritative German translations of Shakespeare. She did all the best work; he received all the credit. His brother, Friedrich Schlegel, lived with Dorothea Veit, daughter of the German Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. Dorothea had divorced her first husband, Simon Veit—a truly revolutionary act for a woman in that time—in order to marry Schlegel.

Caroline also divorced, in order to marry another Friedrich—the philosopher Friedrich Schelling. At Jena, he had succeeded the previous star of Transcendentalism, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, whose “*Ich-Philosophie*” focused the perceiving subject, as Kant did, in subject-object relations. Yet this made him vulnerable to accusations of atheism: of seeing G-d as no more than a projection of human need, with no objective reality. Despite Goethe's efforts to preserve academic freedom, Fichte was dismissed from Jena in 1799, going to Berlin, where theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher was delivering his *Speeches on Religion to Its Cultured*

*Despisers*, arguing that all religion, in all cultures, depends ultimately not on particular revelations but on the human experience of an ultimate dependence upon a transcendent “Mystery” variously understood.

That the philosophical roots of New England’s Transcendentalism lie in the Jena Circle is made clear in the titles of Schelling’s books: *Von der Weltseele* (*On the World Soul*), 1798; *Naturphilosophie* (*The Philosophy of Nature*), 1799; or *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (*A System of Transcendental Idealism*), 1800.

Yet despite Fuller’s study of German with her life-long spiritual friend, James Freeman Clarke—through his study of German at Harvard with Charles Follen, who fled Germany when accused, like Schelling, of supporting revolution—an overlapping circle in London was also important. Made up largely of English Dissenters, many of them Unitarians, it, too, was dominated by men, but included Mary Wollstonecraft. According to Daisy Hay, whose previous work focused on *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron, and Other Tangled Lives* (2011), perhaps the most radical impact of the circle that gathered to dine with Unitarian bookseller and



publisher Joseph Johnson was not its support for political revolutions, but rather for the social revolution bringing forward the voices of women: not only of Mary Wollstonecraft, but also the likes of Anna Barbauld and Maria Edgeworth.

While his elder namesake, Samuel, is still famous, Joseph remains largely forgotten. Yet like Elizabeth Peabody later in Boston, this bookseller and publisher was the very hub of an intellectual circle both revolutionary and inclusive; radical, yet not strictly ideological. Johnson’s dinners, in the odd-shaped upper room above his shop at #72 St. Paul’s Churchyard, drew not only scientists like Joseph Priestley, but also artists like Henry Fuseli, whose painting of a woman with an incubus above her hung there, while resident engraver William Blake tried to illustrate Wollstonecraft’s *Original Stories* (1791) as well as his own privately printed poems. Those tracing the origins of abolitionism will find this circle overlapping with evangelicals such as John Newton, the reformed slave-ship captain, best known as the author of the hymn “Amazing Grace.”

Margaret Fuller emerged not only in the context of the short-lived Transcendental Club. If we are to fully understand the intellectual and spiritual antecedents that inspired her and her colleagues, we must also consider the overlapping German and English circles that preceded them. The trio of Mary Wollstonecraft, Caroline Schelling, and Margaret Fuller surely deserve more thoughtful comparison, recognizing the distinct yet related circles from which each emerged.

*John A. Buehrens is author of Conflagration: How the Transcendentalists Sparked the American Struggle for Racial, Gender, & Social Justice* (Beacon, 2020).



Mary Wollstonecraft

# Poetry

## To MF: On Our Meeting in Verse

By Cheryl Weaver

*Editor's note: A poet, a poem, and a Poetry Column—all for the first time in this issue. After discovering that MFS member Cheryl Weaver is a poet, we invited her to send a poem. Which she did, and which appears below along with her own note about the piece. Which has led to our wanting to follow Cheryl's suggestion that we include a poetry column. Which will appear when we have poems to publish. Which means we encourage you, readers, to send your verses as they pertain to our publication's foci: about or engaging with Margaret Fuller, herself a poet, and how the time she inhabited continues to inform our own; her contemporaries and collaborators, many of whom were poets; and, more generally, thinking creatively through poetry, and dynamic ways of being in the world.*

*Author's note: This poem takes inspiration from Fuller's first extant poem, which begins, "To A.H.B. On our meeting, on my return from N.Y. to Boston, August 1835." I chose to begin my journey engaging with Fuller's poetry through mimicry, a mimicry which also included footnote citations in an earlier draft of the poem, and a nod to the relationship between Fuller and Anna Hazard Barker. Fuller's intense feelings for Barker are embedded in her early poems from 1835–37. The phrase "shut up in prose" plays on another nineteenth-century writer and thinker, Emily Dickinson, who wrote, "They shut me up in Prose" (M223, Fr445, J613). Though the two poets would never meet and there is no evidence that, to my knowledge, Dickinson read Margaret Fuller, these Dickinson lines seem apt for the amount of attention paid to Fuller's prose and so little engagement with her poetry. Early uses of the "tempest-tost" phrase are in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth, and in Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus" that was inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. Completed in 1883, the statue is approximately seventy miles east of Fuller's untimely 1850 death off the shore of Fire Island, NY, when the Elizabeth crashed on rocks and split apart.*

*Cheryl Weaver, a writer and educator, recently completed her dissertation on Emily Dickinson's early letters with assistance from the Emily Dickinson International Society Graduate Fellowship.*

To MF

*On our meeting in verse, April 2023*

For too long you have been 'Shut up  
in prose' with no one to view  
your verse—I want you back, believing,  
god-like, I can save you.

Your words tumbled, tempest-tost  
in the sea—ethereal—while the waves  
lingered. Prescient and ominous,  
your lyric strains find me after all

these years. Your meditation asks:  
but what of God? You divine  
only one prayer and yet I know one,  
too: It is you.

We two, united—fluid  
as the waters that become  
'home till home be every where!'  
And I will always be on the shore—  
waiting—

for you.



## Margaret and the Meteor (Continued from Page 1)



In refocusing on the ways in which Fuller sought to improve her world through available means, I want to show students how they contain the ability to ask the big questions about their world, and to fight to change it.

Part of the problem of Fuller's lackluster reception in the classroom seems to be that anthologies establish and then reinforce the cold categorization of writers and texts that are too intellectually hefty to be neatly archived. This is not news to anyone who has ever used such anthologies, but it bears repeating because it reinforces singular ways of thinking about American literature and history. In his wonderful and necessarily provocative piece in this publication's most recent issue—"David Walker, the Black Reform Movement, and Radical Transcendentalism" (*Conversations* Vol. 4, No. 2)—Alex Moskowitz points to the role that American studies played as a type of soft power in the twentieth century, promoting supposed American ideals against looming threats of external influence. Alex adeptly ties this role of American studies to the depiction of Fuller's radicalism as coming from without, a foreign—European, or Italian—influence that burrowed its way into the "native" Transcendentalist movement.

With this in mind, it looks somewhat nefarious that Fuller's inclusion in survey classes is often for her work on women's rights exclusively. As a boundary-breaking woman, Fuller is neatly filed as protofeminist. But how

much of her oeuvre moves around and beyond this, its genre- and gender-bending force touching so many of the nineteenth-century's political struggles? Never mind her participation in another revolution that involved war, with blood and principles put into action. She utterly dedicated herself to that revolutionary struggle and her dispatches from Rome overflow with gory details and calls to action in the name of universal liberty.

As many scholars have noted, near the end of her life Fuller gradually took a turn toward more explicit support of abolitionism in the United States, whereas her earlier work largely avoided or outright diminished the issue. While the conception of Fuller's radicalism as a product of foreign influence thereby remains, it also becomes clear that this radicalism indeed was coming home. In her final dispatches from Italy, for example, she asks her fellow Americans, "Do you owe no tithe to Heaven for the privileges it has showered on you, for whose achievements so many here suffer and perish daily? Deserve to retain them, by helping your fellow men to acquire them." The horizon for what Fuller's political force could have become seems limitless. This is the Margaret Fuller I want my students to meet.

How did I come to this reevaluation of Fuller, and why is this moment ripe for the brand of radical thinking she espoused? Every day, Americans are finding civil rights and livability further eroded. Women's auton-

omy over their bodies is being systematically erased, young people find themselves saddled with insurmountable student debt, and black Americans continue to be the victims of state violence that kills with little consequence. In this time of turmoil, I found myself drawn to the tumult of the American nineteenth century and the voices that dared to rise above the din to scream justice. My journey began with studies of John Brown, one of the century's most famous radicals. I read through the biographies of Brown written, respectively, by black sociologist and activist W. E. B. Du Bois and white, southern literary classic Robert Penn Warren, to see how later reevaluations of his legacy fell on different sides of the color line. To understand contemporary reimaginings, I read James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird* and Russell Banks's *Cloudsplitter*. I ran many miles along the twilight streets of Auburn, Alabama, where I teach, listening to the audiobooks of David S. Reynolds's *John Brown, Abolitionist*, and Evan Carton's *Patriotic Treason*.

With my own new understanding, I wanted to bring some of this work into my teaching, and thus a planned reading of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* turned into an extended examination of how the infernal institution of slavery in part transformed a staunchly individualistic and intellectual Transcendentalism into an ideology of direct action. My plan was to read Thoreau's eager defenses of Brown, and for students to see how the Thoreau of *Walden*—so often denigrated by the superficially informed for not washing his own laundry—came to see the efficacy, and perhaps the necessity, of violence against the state. In this way, he would serve as a case study for how the life of the mind primes one's activation into real radicalism.

While teaching *Civil Disobedience*, however, I noticed a disturbing trend. We discussed the title, and what the term has come to mean since Thoreau's day: generally taught to young Americans as the origin of a twentieth-century genealogy of absolute nonviolence, championed by the likes of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. In countless essays and exam answers, my students expounded on the virtue of nonviolent resistance as the height of the liberal citizen's personal disapproval of their government. The issue with this is I had gone out of my way to offer an alternative interpretation. We had read *Civil Disobedience* back-to-back with "A Plea for Captain John Brown," for example, and had dedi-

cated an entire class session to discussing Brown and the armed raid on Harpers Ferry, closing with a reading of the poem "The Portent," which Herman Melville concludes by dubbing Brown "The meteor of war"—drawing a straight line, thus, between the raid and the extreme violence of the Civil War.

I noted how neither the title of Thoreau's essay, nor much of the essay itself, held any direct connection to nonviolence. The general consensus in mainstream views of Thoreau strictly falls in line with nonviolent resistance that stands up for what is right but does not truly disturb. Not only is this a mischaracterization of Thoreau, but it is a disservice to King, Gandhi, and countless other people of color who suffered while fighting for equality. To paint nonviolent, passive resistance as the only tool available to the oppressed is to rob them of the agency to truly resist. It suggests that to step outside the oxymoronic bounds of "polite rebellion" is to welcome the disciplinary violence of the state. This misreading was especially troubling because



we had traced the development of Thoreau's abolitionist sentiments, and how in "A Plea" he claims not to seek violence, but also sees how it may become necessary. I explained, for example, how, in the aftermath of Brown's raid, Thoreau helped shepherd Francis Jackson Meriam, an idealistic but unprepared latecomer to the raiders, to safety during his escape from military pursuit. Still, there it was, in so much student writing, or perhaps spat out by some AI language model: Thoreau remained the patron saint of nonviolent resistance. The individual—the liberal subject—remained the only lens through which to view political action, which necessarily must be nonviolent and largely symbolic.

While there were spots of students identifying and, at times, identifying with the radical strains in their readings, they mostly failed to realize what I attempted to teach. Maybe the fault lies with me, a problem of the organization or presentation of the material. It seems that, unguided, students tend to view these matters as settled, the fire long extinguished and the ashes scattered by the winds of time. Matters are settled and they thus see no reason to trouble them. That would, after all, lead to more thinking, more work, and maybe even more or longer readings. But sometimes—with the urgency of history made clear, with lively conversation and debate—some of them find glowing embers they think are worth preserving. While students seemed hesitant to outwardly express understanding of or admiration for someone like Brown, it would show up in how they advocated for his actions in essays or placed him alongside Frederick Douglass in analyses. They realized that in the face of an unjust, corrupt, and inhuman system, one must not only resist, but also rethink the world, making it not only new, but hopefully better. It was in those moments that I would urge them onward to push that thinking forward or to apply their newfound intellectual framework to the questions of our day. Students often seem genuinely excited when they can do this. These are the scarce mythical moments one lives for as a teacher. And these moments are what I have tried to bring into the classroom more routinely by emphasizing the urgency of the radical, and how radicals of old have shaped the world we now find too mundane.

What does this hold for how teachers of antebellum U.S. literature and history should approach the very real radicalisms that evolved among the marquee names in



print anthologies? One need only look at the range of conflicts afflicting the United States now, in what many are fond of calling "the most divided we've ever been." We have much to learn for confronting injustice by educating ourselves about both the failures and achievements of nineteenth-century thinkers like Brown, Fuller, Thoreau, and Walker—thinkers from another era in which the violence inherent to the nation's functions boiled into political fever and direct action.

I suggest that engaging directly with the debates in these texts is also, and perhaps especially, necessary in required, non-major courses. Those might be the best times to introduce these ideas, and to foster their bloom and utmost urgency in student thinking. Such an approach to pedagogy makes sense if for no other reason than because it is likely the only time in which students will encounter anything like these ideas on their way to degrees in business, engineering, or computer science.

Through these perceptions of radicalism in nineteenth-century affairs, my pedagogy, then, has come to emphasize change and growth in texts: introducing both as pillars of democratic responsibility. Sure, students should be able to pick out specific trends and write a few hundred words about them, but of what use is stagnant knowledge? As my recent experiences have revealed, students respond to radical thinking in one form or another. Perhaps by rejecting the ideas as now stale and useless, and other times as important within historical context. But occasionally, and I think more often than in previous semesters, students see the veins and sinew connecting then to now, and they feel a responsibility for their world. Then they find the literature of radicalism refreshing in its steadfastness and captivating in its clear-eyed thoughtfulness.



Proclamazione della Repubblica Romana

This is ultimately what I want students to take from our readings: the realization that the ideas are not dead and inaccessible, but useful and as easy to take up as breathing. In short, it shakes them awake—as if they’d been Thoreau’s sleepers unthinkingly moving from one task to another, in their quests to amass credit-hours. My students often come from privileged backgrounds where rebellion is not only seemingly unnecessary, but the thought of it does not even occur. They may notice glaring issues within our society or the world at large, but even then can be quick to wave them away as another part of the status quo. After all, what could they begin to do to change such enormous problems?

The Transcendentalists and their ilk offer a way to break out of such circumscribed thinking and strike at the very foundations of that complacency. Even a prodigious thinker like Fuller in her life moved from innocence into experience, and in that experience found what could be labeled a utopian outlook. But what is utopia but a radical reimagining of our status quo? The Rome she found was not the august imperial center of the world as she learned from her canonical studies—but what it became was something more valuable, more concrete, and may explain how she came to view the world and its possibilities. Surely there is something in these sentiments that students can take to heart as well

as mind. If nothing else, it offers them a humble nudge out of the comfort of uncritical neutrality.

News of the world may be bleak to teacher and student alike, and the influence of the humanities may seem to wane as higher education is pushed ever more toward career training and the corporate. And yet, as Fuller writes in an 1849 *Tribune* article, following the Roman Republic’s failure: “Truth is not dead, Honor yet glows in many breasts, and Falsehood cannot destroy immortal verities by its corrupt use of their names.” The legacies of these writers are not some dusty, static tomes. Neither are they something that now “goes without saying” in their simplicity, but are instead pliable and infinitely applicable. So in semesters to come, my students and I will again sit down with Margaret Fuller—the Fuller of revolution and passion, with her shift from the intellectual to the material, not of a single inclusion in an overpriced anthology—to address the impossible and the impossibly urgent, ever working toward better answers, toward better action.

*Matthew Spence is a lecturer in English at Auburn University.*

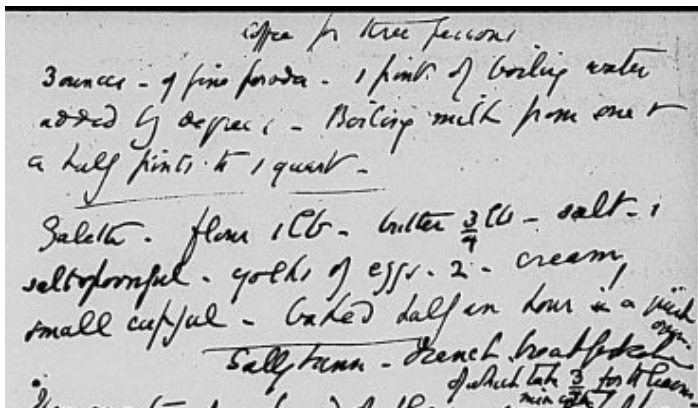
Note: Images accompanying this article are from [Ohio Memory Collection](#), the Public Domain Collection, [Flowers of the Sky](#), and [Wikimedia](#).

# Recipes

## Coffee for Three Persons

By Sonia Di Loreto

*Editor's Note: Somehow, Society President Sonia Di Loreto and I stumbled upon Elizabeth Barrett Browning's recipe "Coffee for three persons," housed in the New York Public Library's Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collections of English and American Literature Digital Collection. It also includes a recipe for galette, to go along with the coffee. "Perhaps the third person was Margaret," Sonia speculated. All of which leads to our introducing a new column in Conversations: Recipes. Also in this issue: Lydia Maria Child's recipe for coffee, which begs the question: Does caffeine account for the vast productivity of our favorite nineteenth-century figures?*



In one of those [fascinating blog pieces](#) written by librarians, Jessica and I found Elizabeth Barrett Browning's recipe for coffee and galettes. That gave us a fleeting glimpse of EBB's life as a British expatriate in Florence, and provided a great source for fantasizing about all those coffee parties held at "Casa Guidi."

Here are the two recipes:

### *Coffee for three persons*

3 ounces of fine powder  
1 pint of boiling water added by degree  
boiling milk from one & a half pint to 1 quart-

### *Galette*

flour 1 lb  
butter  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb  
salt 1 salt spoonful  
yolks of eggs 2  
cream small cupful  
baked half an hour in a brick oven"

The number "three" bespeaks the welcoming household that EBB maintained, while the fast-paced handwriting

on the page matches EBB's life in Italy: after a secret marriage in London to Robert Browning, the couple established themselves in Tuscany, where the climate was thought to be more congenial to EBB's problematic health. In Florence, they became a pulsing center of intellectual conversations, thanks also to their unwavering hospitality to a great number of personalities and Anglo American visitors, including Margaret Fuller.

It is in one letter written by Elizabeth, to her sister Arabella, that we learn that, indeed, Margaret Fuller had been one of those "three persons" to enjoy EBB's coffee, and maybe even some galettes: "This letter was begun yesterday—I began to write as soon as I had calmed





myself a little after reading your news—and, while I was writing, in came, Madame Ossoli—stayed dinner .. stayed coffee .. hours upon hours, the rain helping. I like her much ...but I wanted to write to you, & shall lose a post, or rather two posts, by that visit..." (15–16 April, 1850)

Dinner, coffee, rain, and letter-writing. They all point to a series of domestic and intimate relations, both close and afar, that EBB cultivated carefully during her life in Italy. EBB's letters to Arabella are fascinating windows into the poet's household life, her writing, her relation to Robert Browning, and the comments about the people they met in Italy.

One such comment is about Fuller, of course, after an October day in 1849, when Fuller, with her husband, visited EBB and Robert Browning at "Casa Guidi" (pictured above) initiating a series of encounters and striking a friendship based more on sympathy and sentiments than on political opinions, as EBB reports in another letter to Arabella: "I disagree with [Fuller] per-

haps on every serious point—and have avoided two or three different subjects, in talking to her, because I felt there was a gulf betwixt us, even while our hands leant over to clasp. Yet there is a curious sympathy between us—she drew me, I felt, by her truthfulness & generosity, yes, & tenderness of character—I loved her, & could not bear to measure the depth of this gulf" (14–16 June, 1850).

I like to think that the navigation of such gulfs can be helped with coffee and galettes, and I treasure the examples of these encounters and exchanges, even when opinions diverge, because, as Fuller told Emelyn Story about her friendship with the Brownings, "we meet more truly of late."

*Sonia Di Loreto is Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of Torino and President of the Margaret Fuller Society.*

Note: Images accompanying this article are from "[Fifteen Paintings of Coffee Lovers](#)" and by [Susan Wright](#) for *The New York Times*.

## Lydia Child's Coffee Recipe

Submitted by Charlene Avallone

*This recipe comes from Lydia Maria Child's The Frugal Housewife: Dedicated to Those Who are Not Ashamed of Economy (Boston: Marsh & Capen, and Carter & Hendee, 1829). Probably Starbucks learned from her. In the cookbook, "Raspberry Shrub" precedes the recipe and "Chocolate" follows it. Renamed The American Frugal Housewife by 1839, the book went through at least thirty-two editions. Here we reprint the recipe as it appears in the book's first edition—Charlene Avallone*

### COFFEE.

As substitutes for coffee, some use dry brown-bread crusts, and roast them; others soak rye-grain in rum, and roast it; others roast peas in the same way as coffee. None of these are very good; and peas so used are considered unhealthy. Where there is a large family of apprentices and workmen, and coffee is very dear, it may be worth while to use the substitutes, or to mix them half and half with coffee; but, after all, the best economy is to go without.

French coffee is so celebrated, that it may be worth while to tell how it is made; though no prudent housekeeper will make it, unless she has boarders, who are willing to pay for expensive cooking.

The coffee should be roasted more than is common with us; it should not hang drying over the fire, but should be roasted quick; it should be ground soon after roasting, and used as soon as it is ground. Those who pride themselves on first-rate coffee, burn it and grind it every morning. The powder should be placed in the coffee-pot in the proportions of an ounce to less than a pint of water. The water should be poured upon the coffee boiling hot. The coffee should be kept at the boiling point; but should not boil. Coffee made in this way must be made in a biggin. It would not be clear in a common coffee pot.

A bit of fish-skin as big as a ninepence, thrown into coffee while it is boiling, tends to make it clear. If you use it just as it comes from the salt-fish, it will be apt to give an unpleasant taste to the coffee: it should be washed clean as a bit of cloth, and hung up till perfectly dry. The white of eggs, and even egg shells are good to settle coffee. Rind of salt pork is excellent.

Some people think coffee is richer and clearer for having a bit of sweet butter or a whole egg, dropped in and stirred, just before it is done roasting, and ground up,

104

THE FRUGAL

### RASPBERRY SHRUB.

Raspberry shrub mixed with water is a pure, delicious drink for summer; and in a country where raspberries are abundant, it is good economy to make it answer instead of Port and Catalonia wine. Put raspberries in a pan, and scarcely cover them with strong vinegar. Add a pint of sugar to a pint of juice (of this you can judge by first trying your pan to see how much it holds); scald it, skim it, and bottle it when cold.

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shell and all, with the coffee. But these things are not economical, except on a farm, where butter and eggs are plenty. A half a gill of cold water, poured in after you take your coffee-pot off the fire, will usually settle the coffee.

If you have not cream for your coffee, it is a very great improvement to boil your milk, and use it while hot.

*Charlene Avallone is a Past President of the Margaret Fuller Society.*

# Conferences

## Fuller Society on the Conference Circuit

By Jana Argersinger

Discover here how to take part in a future conference session organized by the Fuller Society, and read about the panels we have sponsored since the Fall 2022 edition of this publication appeared. You'll find a call for proposals for the C19 conference in Pasadena, California, March 2024; an invitation to our MLA session on the social justice classroom in Philadelphia, January 2024; and a review of panels and other activities at ALA and MLA 2023. (For abstracts of 2023 papers and bios of their presenters, please see the society [website](#).)



Jan Turnquist of Orchard House appears in character as Louisa May Alcott

### Recent Conferences

American Literature Association

May 2023, Boston

Foundations for the “World at Large”: Women Authors and Their Homes

In May 2023, during the ALA conference in Boston's historic Back Bay, we presented two panels on women authors and their homes that reflected our ongoing commitment to expanding the society's boundaries. Both panels attracted strong attendance.

Just as our first session got underway, the door suddenly opened to a surprise visit by Louisa May Alcott, who turned out under her snood and floor-sweeping skirt to

be Jan Turnquist of Orchard House (also our third presenter in propria persona)—delighting the room with her well-loved impersonation. Four talks then proceeded apace, with Jana Argersinger (MFS First Vice President) as chair:

Phyllis Cole (Penn State Brandywine), “The Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House: Our Author's Birthplace as a Social Service Center”

Anna De Biasio (University of Bergamo, Italy), “A Crowded House: Family Ties, Independence, and Authorship in L. M. Alcott”

Jan Turnquist (Executive Director, Orchard House), “Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House—Where Creativity, Hope, and Inspiration Abide”





Fullerenes gather in Boston at ALA

Katherine R. Lynes (Union College), “a policeman he wanted me / to behave’: Gardens and Home in Black Eco-poetics”

Jennifer Daly (University of New Hampshire), “(Re) Claiming Women’s Intellectual Space: Elizabeth Palmer Peabody’s Book Room”

In our second session, MFS President Sonia Di Loreto of University of Torino, Italy, carried the conversation forward with another set of engaging talks:

A productive business meeting followed the sessions. And a large company of MFS members, panelists, and friends gathered one evening to dine and chat at Stephanie’s on Newbury Street, where at least one person indulged in Boston cream pie, of course.

Marco Sioli (University of Milan, Italy), “Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s House and the Women’s Rights National Historical Park at Seneca Falls, N.Y.”

Ariel Silver (Southern Virginia University), “‘The Center of the Rebellion’: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Her New York Homes”

Summer Hamilton (The Pennsylvania State University), “Locating the Discursive Impetus behind June Jordan’s Construction of Home in *Soldier*”



Ariel Silver presents her paper at ALA



Panelists at MLA. From Left to Right: Stephanie Peebles Tavera, Sabrina Evans, Marlas Yvonne Whitley, and Thomas Howard.

Modern Language Association  
 January 2023, San Francisco  
 Conditions of Exile in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond

At MLA in early January 2023, the society brought together four scholars for an exciting panel titled “Conditions of Exile in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond.”

Chair: Christina Katopodis (City U of New York)

Marlas Yvonne Whitley (North Carolina State University), “Transcendence from the Colored Conventions to the Harlem Renaissance”

Sabrina Evans (The Pennsylvania State University), “Exile and the Perils of Travel: Nineteenth-Century Black Women Organizers’ Fight for Dignity”

Thomas Howard (Washington University in St. Louis), “Du Bois in Berlin, Du Bois in Atlanta: The Affect of Exile in *The Souls of Black Folk*”

Stephanie Peebles Tavera (Texas A&M University–Central Texas), “Exile’s Persistence: Margaret Fuller and the Public Trauma Culture of Expat Paris”

## Future Conferences

Modern Language Association  
 January 4–7, 2024, Philadelphia

Join us in Philadelphia for a session titled “Mutual Transformation: The Social Justice Classroom in the Nineteenth Century and Today.”

Chair: Christina Katopodis, (City U of New York)

Jess Libow (Haverford College), “From Self-Reliance to Self-Care: Transcendentalism and Social Justice in the Classroom”

Shermaine Jones (Virginia Commonwealth University), “Breath-taking Pedagogy and the Practice of Hope: Course Design and Teaching a BLM Literature Course”



Fullerenes, panelists, and their friends gather for dinner at MLA.

Sarah Ruffing Robbins (Texas Christian University),  
“Fuller-Inspired Conversations on School Curriculum  
Battles and Wheatley-Linked Public Humanities”

Diane Baia Hale (independent scholar and playwright),  
“A Mind Afire: Marie Duclos Fretageot and a Forgotten  
Frontier of American Progressive Education”



- untimely ends
- refusing endings
- playing with traditional narrative or poetic endings
- various means to—or around—an end
- reform efforts as well as their imperfections and limits
- failed revolutions
  - critiques of “resilience,” as theorized and applied
  - finishing schools or crossing finish lines
  - finishing as orgasm
  - abortion, broadly conceived
  - ways around, through, or under seemingly insuperable barriers—including structural racism
  - ways in which this new generation of students and faculty are challenging us to change the ends or goals of American literature syllabi

Early career scholars are especially encouraged to apply. Please send proposals and questions to Christina Katopodis at [katopodis.christina@gmail.com](mailto:katopodis.christina@gmail.com) with “C19 Proposal” in the subject line by August 26.

Note: In the next issue of *Conversations*, you can look forward to a recap of the MFS panel at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering (three panelists pictured below with Phyllis Cole)

## Call for Proposals

C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists  
March 14–16, 2024, Pasadena

“Refusing Foreclosures and Endings: 19C Women Writers’ Defiance, Persistence, and Resilience”

The Margaret Fuller Society seeks to form a panel for the March 2024 C19 conference in Pasadena, CA. We invite abstracts of no more than 250 words that engage with Fuller and/or other 19C women writers (American and otherwise) as well as the conference theme—“The End.” Papers might consider the following topics, among numerous possibilities:



## About *Conversations*

*Conversations* is published digitally twice yearly. Society membership includes a publication subscription. Current and past issues are available on the Society's [website](#).

Please write for us! Share your ideas, your political critiques, your poems, your historical interventions, your accounts of the delights or difficulties of being in this world. Send us essays, reviews, images, Letters to the Editor, or stubborn and inter-genre things. Send us things that sing, things to debate, things that both admire and challenge the work of Fuller and her circles, things that better light the world that her contemporaries and we inhabit, and that help build new worlds and ways of seeing them.

We accept articles of 500 to 1,000 words with accompanying images in .jpg and .png formats, attached as separate files. Send submissions and queries to Jessica Lipnack at [jessicalipnack@gmail.com](mailto:jessicalipnack@gmail.com) labeled as, for example:

**Subject: *Conversations* 5.2–Provocative Essay submission**

Deadline for Vol. 5, No. 2, is: **December 31, 2023**.

Editor: Jessica Lipnack  
Associate Editor: Andrew Wildermuth

Associate Editor: Sonia Di Loreto  
Design Editor: Christina Katopodis



### Join the Margaret Fuller Society!

We warmly invite you to join the Margaret Fuller Society. We are a dynamic, non-profit organization with members of many backgrounds from all around the world: united by an interest in the work, life, and times of Margaret Fuller. We are private enthusiasts, casual critics, independent and academic scholars alike. No matter your degree, level of expertise, or personal background, you are welcome in our Society. We look forward to exchanging with you.

The Society maintains an active website with up-to-date information on Fuller studies, Transcendentalist studies, and nineteenth-century history and literary studies. Members post news and exchange resources via listserv email exchange. Twice yearly, we publish *Conversations*, where we conduct critical conversations on Margaret Fuller's work, life, and times. Our Society sponsors panels at annual conferences of major scholarly associations including the MLA and ALA. We cooperate with other New England writers associations and research institutions, and we have been the meeting point for cutting-edge international debate, collaborative book projects, and international conferences.

Membership for students and people with low income is \$10 per year. Regular Membership is \$20. Sustaining Membership is \$50. Lifetime Membership is \$250. **Join us [here](#).**



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